



Legacy Among the Live Oaks

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Good stewardship is a way of life for Tim String. His father, a Mobile surgeon, instilled love of the land in his son at an early age. They spent many weekends and holidays on their Mississippi farm. When Dr. String became ill, they sold the Mississippi property and purchased land in Baldwin County in 1995. The proximity to home allowed them to spend many hours improving the property. Though Dr. String enjoyed the property only a few years, Tim cherishes the quality time they were able to spend together. They spent at least every Sunday together, and this allowed them to become especially close before his death. Tim is committed to spending quality time with his family and teaching the same values to his children that his dad passed to him.

Tim's love and appreciation for nature are apparent in many aspects of his life. Not only does he spend time managing the 378-acre tract, his chosen vocation is serving as a hunting and fishing guide. He guides hunts in Western states during

late fall and winter; spring and summer are spent fishing in Alabama.

Tim's friend from high school, Danny Dunwell, was a frequent companion on visits to the Mississippi farm and later to Baldwin County. Danny loved working on the land so much that he became a forester, and he now assists with the management of the String's property. Tim and Danny's combined knowledge of wildlife and forestry has been put to good use on the land which had very little previous management. Although longleaf pines occurred naturally, the former owner added slash pines to the longleaf stands. Nothing else was done to manage the timber. The resulting timber, thirty years later, was overcrowded and stagnant. After purchasing the land, the timber was thinned over a five-year period, removing most of the loblolly and slash. The resulting stand was healthier and much more vigorous. An additional thinning is planned in the near future. Whenever possible, natural regeneration is intended after the final harvest.

Pockets of oaks occur naturally on the property. Though there are a variety of red oaks, live oak is the most prominent. Once the stands were opened up, the oaks really took off. Instead of fighting nature, Tim decided to favor the oaks because of their contribution to wildlife and aesthetics. After removing most of the pines from these areas, the oaks have taken over. The oaks are fertilized annually, and their growth is phenomenal. According to Tim, the live oak acorn production rivals any sawtooth oak. The large, graceful live oaks that surround the camp houses offer an idea of how beautiful these oak groves will be in the future.

Wildlife management is especially important to these winners of the 2001 Helene Mosley for the Southwest Region. The String family and their friends enjoy hunting and fishing, as well as observing different animals on the property. It is important to have wildlife on the property all year long, not just during hunting season. To ensure



The scenic and unspoiled Styx River runs through the String's TREASURE Forest. Its sandy bank, dotted with Atlantic white cedar, is a favorite gathering place for family and friends.

this, year-round food and cover needs are considered in all management. Along with the oak trees, native vegetation is encouraged through fertilization. Blueberries, honeysuckle, persimmons, chinquapins, muscadines, and greenbrier are fertilized to increase browse for wildlife. Additionally, thirteen food plots are scattered over the property. Rape, chicory, clover, and vetch are planted. Rye is planted in the winter. Supplemental feeding from February through September

provides additional food for the constantly improving deer herd. When conditions are good, the deer eat very little supplemental feed, but during a recent drought period, they ate almost five times as much feed. Cover is also important, and leaving unburned spots in the pine stands encourages thick areas that provide excellent bedding.

Since Tim serves as a duck-hunting guide,

it seemed appropriate for his property to have ducks. Three years ago a duck pond was built. This winter, over 160 wood ducks were on the pond. Watching the ducks was entertaining and educational, but it came at a cost. The ducks ate over 800 pounds of corn!

A larger pond provides excellent fishing for friends and family. The pond, along with a pier and sitting area, creates a scenic backdrop for the camp houses. The pond was on the property at the time it was purchased, but it had to be rebuilt after Hurricane Danny caused extensive damage. Situated above the pond are two camp houses. This area is surrounded by huge, gnarled live oaks. It is here that Paige String, Tim's wife, is reminded of the reason that all the work on the property is worthwhile. According to Paige, "When you watch the sun come up through the trees, you're just overpowered with the glory."

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The woods and open areas provide a great place for the String children to play.

Spring 2003

Photos by Madeline Hildreth



Having wildlife on the property year-round is important to the String family. Browse vegetation such as honeysuckle is fertilized (top), and this planted field of clover is one of thirteen food plots scattered over the property (bottom).

An intensive prescribed burning program not only benefits the timber and wildlife programs, but also gives the area a park-like appearance. Since the woods are often full of children, the open areas provide a great place to play.

This unique property offers an opportunity for the owners to get close to nature. Because of its close proximity to their Fairhope home, the Strings are able to visit on late weekday afternoons. Plus, the size is workable. Tim enjoys being able to do the work himself, along with help from his friend Danny. Tim, Paige, and their three children also enjoy sharing the property, and another benefit of its nearness to home allows them to frequently invite guests. They have hosted large groups, including last year's Landowner Conference and the Baldwin County Teachers' Workshop. They have also entertained school groups from Fairhope Elementary and a pre-school class. But the family especially takes pleasure in having their friends and children visit. "The kids just love to walk through the woods. It's great to watch four or five little boys run around shoot-

ing at squirrels in the open woods," Tim remarked. (Though Landon, a third grader, refuses to eat the tree rats!)

The scenic Styx River runs through the property and its sandy bank is dotted with Atlantic white cedar. The unspoiled river is another gathering place for visitors. According to Tim, "It's a lot less crowded than the beaches and more fun!" The river and its sloughs, which have been left in their natural state, provide additional fishing spots.

Tim String loves the land and is committed to improving the forest and its resources. The growth of the oak trees, the improving deer herd, the nesting wood ducks, and the towering longleaf pines are all important. More important, though, are watching his children, Landon, McKenzie, and Sam, enjoy the land. Paige thinks it is especially good for her children's toys to be a little bit of God's creation. Picking flowers, catching butterflies, walking along the edge of the sandy riverbank, finding a rare four-leafed clover—these are the simple things that will instill the same values in Tim and Paige String's children that his



Tim says live oak acorn production rivals that of sawtooth oak.

father passed to him. These memories and the values they teach are the true TREASURES of the String property. 🌲



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A pier on the large pond creates a scenic sitting area as well as provides excellent fishing for friends and family.